

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

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AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 6361

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: AN-NAHAR PUBLISHER BELIEVES CONFESSIONALISM IN LEBANON WILL
DIE HARD

1. GHASSAN TUEINI, PUBLISHER OF AN-NAHAR AND LEBANESE MINISTER,
EXPRESSED VIEW TO ME THAT FUNDAMENTAL POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN
LEBANON WILL BE LONG IN COMING. HE BELIEVES THAT MARONITE SUCCESSES
IN CARVING OUT THEIR OWN PATRIMONY WILL PERPETUATE CONFESSIONAL
CHARACTER OF LEBANON FOR MANY YEARS TO COME AND THAT MOSLEMS, SUCH
AS JUMBLATT, WHO HAVE ADVOCATED DECONFESSIONALIZATION, WILL BE FORCED
TO ACCEPT THIS REALITY. FUNDAMENTALLY, HE CONSIDERS THAT LEBANESE
PEOPLE HAVE NEVER ENJOYED A NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS (A VIEW ALSO HELD
BY MANY OTHER LEBANESE

AND THAT CONFESSIONAL AND FEUDALISTIC
FRAGMENTATION WILL DIE HARD.

2. TUEINI BELIEVES THAT BEFORE FUNDAMENTAL POLITICAL AND SOCIAL
REFORMS CAN BE INTRODUCED IN LEBANON, THERE WILL BE A REVOLUTION
IN THE RANKS OF THE RULING CLIQUES. FOR EXAMPLE, SOME DAY SOON THE
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SCIONS OF SUCH LEADING FEUDAL CLANS AS THE CHAMOUNISTS AND THE

GEMAYELS WILL OVERTHROW THEIR ELDERS EITHER BY POLITICAL MEANS OR ASSASSINATION. THIS, CONTENDS TUEINI, IS A NECESSARY FIRST STEP TOWARD THE EVENTUAL DIMINUTION OF THE POWER OF THE FAMILY-FEUDAL CLANS IN LEBANON.

3. LIKE OTHERS, TUEINI BELIEVES THAT THE SYRIAN AND PALESTINIAN HEAVY-HANDEDNESS IN LEBANON WILL INDUCE LEBANESE MOSLEMS TO DRAW CLOSER TO THE CHRISTIANS. MOSLEM WEAKNESS WILL FORCE MOSLEMS TO AGREE TO THE PERPETUATION OF THE CONFESSIONAL CHARACTER OF LEBANON, EVEN IF THIS MEANS ACCEPTING AN AUTONOMOUS OR SEMI-AUTONOMOUS MARONITE ENTITY. HOWEVER, HE DOES NOT RPT NOT BELIEVE THAT IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO EFFECT A MOSLEM-CHRISTIAN RECONCILIATION WITHOUT INVOLVING JUMBLATT. HE COMMENTED THAT WHILE JUMBLATT POSES AS A LEFTIST, HE IS AS FEUDAL AS THEY COME. HE IS LESS OF A THREAT IN ANY GOVERNMENT THAN OUTSIDE.

4. TUEINI BELIEVES THAT ARAFAT WANTS TO MAKE A DEAL WITH ASSAD BUT FACES OPPOSITION BOTH FROM JUMBLATT AND OTHER LEADEES IN PLO MOVEMENT.

5. LIKE EVERYONE ELSE, TUEINI IS UNCERTAIN CONCERNING SYRIAN INTENTIONS IN LEBANON. HE FEARS THAT SYRIANS INTEND TO HOLD ON TO BEKAA AND HERMEL AREA, AND PERHAPS EVEN TAKE AND KEEP TRIPOLI. HE ACCEPTS FACT THAT STRONG SYRIAN INFLUENCE IN LEBANON IS PROBABLY PERMANENT. HE CONSIDERS THAT IMPORTANT FACTOR CONTRIBUTING TO SYRIAN ATTITUDES TOWARD LEBANON IS SYRIA'S LONGSTANDING JEALOUSY OF LEBANON'S ECONOMIC SUCCESS. IN TUEINI'S VIEW, SYRIA DOES NOT RPT NOT WANT LEBANON EVER AGAIN TO REGAIN THE ECONOMIC AND OTHER ADVANTAGES IT HAS HAD OVER SYRIA.

6. TUEINI SUGGESTS THAT SYRIA SEEKS TO FORGE CLOSE LINKS BETWEEN LEBANON, SYRIA, JORDAN AND A HOPED-FOR PALESTINIAN STATE ON THE WEST BANK--UNDER SYRIAN LEADERSHIP. CHAMOUN MIGHT NOT OPPOSE THIS SINCE MARONITE ENTITY, IN CHAMOUN'S VIEW, COULD CONSTITUTE ONE OF SEVERAL SEPARATE AUTONOMOUS UNITS IN BROAD "CONFEDERATION." MARONITE STATE, THEN, WOULD BE IN LESS SHARP JUXTAPOSITION TO MOSLEM LEBANESE EQUIVALENT.

7. COMMENT: I RESPECT TUEINI'S JUDGEMENT, AND BELIEVE THERE IS MUCH VALIDITY IN WHAT HE SAYS. I CERTAINLY SENSE THAT SYRIA HAS LONG BEEN CONFIDENTIAL

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JEALOUS AND RESENTFUL OF LEBANESE SUCCESS STORY AND THAT, IF IT IS NOT RPT NOT PRIMARY MOTIVATING FACTOR IN SYRIAN POLICY TOWARD LEBANON , IT IS CONTRIBUTING ELEMENT. SEELYE

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